critical digest

Vol. II No. 24 April 3, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y. Opening This Week

Cry of the Peacock-Mansfield, 4/6/50. Cecil Robson's adaptation of French play by Jean Anouilh features Oscar Karlweis, Lili Darvas and Raymond Lovell. Directed by Martin Ritt, produced by James Colligan and Donald Medford.

Daily Reviewers Look At The New Play

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Mixed reaction to Joshua Logan's version of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" is reminiscent of reviews on That Lady earlier in the season. Again it is a question if the star or the play is the thing. Though all the critics praised Helen Hayes and her supporting cast, four didn't think the play was interesting enough to recommend. Critics of Herald Tribune, Post, World Telegram and Sun and Eagle praised Hayes but panned play. Atkinson, Times, questioned if Logan's free adaptation of the Russian classic was worthwhile, but he still gave his blessings to the proceedings. Coleman, Mirror, thought the adaptation was in true Chekhov style, but most of his colleagues didn't agree.

The Magazine Critics View the Shows

Great To Be Alive-Winter Garden, 3/23/50. Two "pros", two "so-sos" and seven outright pannings were added to the critical file of Vinton Freedley's new musical. Valerie Bettis' dancing continued to draw raves. Critics thought original idea in Bullock-Regan musical comedy was fine, but the majority didn't like the way it's carried out. Chief complaint was that one gag wasn't enough to base a full length musical on. Minor complaints were that the material provided for actors and singers didn't equal that provided for the dancers. Bolton, Morning Telegraph, suggests some editing would turn show into solid hit. Colby, Journal of Commerce, thinks the show is in best Winter Garden traditions. Francis, Billboard, liked the ghost sequences best; suggested play should be called "Great To Be Dead".

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Nobody, but nobody, seems willing to attack Gian-Carlo Menotti's new hit, though several critics have reservations. George Jean Nathan would call the musical drama perfect if it were not for the opera style technique of having the solos directed at the audience. Krutch, Nation, considers the score less melodic than The Medium, but he feels Menotti has mastered his own art. Atkinson, Times, and Kastendieck, Christian Science Monitor, join the bandwagon with "pro" reviews. Vera Bryner, alternate to the much heralded Patricia Neway, won the applause of Chapman, News. Watts, Post, continues to back up his "so-so" appraisal. He considers South Pacific a more valuable example of completely integrated musical drama.

News and Notes

Joseph Wood Krutch, Nation, returns to his reviewing post after several months illness...John Mason Brown, SRL, was feted at Town Hall Club luncheon after delivering his 50th lecture at Town Hall...Issues of "The Playbill" carry notice, "Ladies are requested to remove their hats"...Derwent Awards for best supporting performances of the season will be announced soon...Harold Clurman, New Republic, will direct King Lear in the fall, his 51st assignment. Clurman is now on way to Europe to see the plays and write a book...Brooks Atkinson, Times, delivered the eulogy at Arthur Hopkins funeral...The Consul will be disked by Decca, Death of a Salesman by Columbia. Donald Bain, assistant stage manager of The Cocktail Party, filed a review of the play for "The London Quarterly Nine"...Lucius Beebe, Herald Tribune, will retire to his Colorado home...Robert Sylvester, News, sold "Second Oldest Profession" to the movies, it had just been produced on television.

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' The Green Room Department '

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SAROYAN HUNTS BANKER...Denying a Herald Tribune report that he had signed a screen writing contract, William Saroyan wrote to the H.T. movie department that he is seeking "a practical minded, level headed, uninspired banker to lend me money to make a picture that will be done inexpensively, unimportantly, without professional actors, without hysterical music, and with no hope of making a monkey out of wrong, or even right." He also disclaimed any writing credit for the screen version of "The Human Comedy", a picture which was "unbased" on his novel.

IDEA OF THE WEEK...Morehouse, WT&S, believes that latecomers to the theatre, with seats in the middle of the row, should not be seated until the intermission.

CHAPMAN VS. VARIETY...Chapman, News, has a ready answer for Variety's discovery that he uses the first person pronounc more than any other critic. "I use it to make clear there is nobody but me to blame. This is handy for fan mail. An anonymous correspondent writing a postcard in block letters can start off by penciling "You Louse..." If I used the editorial "we", he'd not be sure whether to start "You lice..." or "You louses..." And if I used the utterly impersonal form of writing the poor angry reader would have to begin with "Dear It", which is awkward and not very satisfying."

HOLLYWOOD AND ACTING...Margaret Phillips and Alec Guiness have both signed screen contracts, Watts, Post, notes. Because the screen is no place to test the acting abilities of an actor, the critic thinks we will just have to guess how great these two young people might have been.

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CHECKING THE ADS...Great To Be Alive, which opened to mixed reviews from the daily critics, featured a display ad of highly edited phrases from the reviews. Comments from first nighters Eddie Cantor, Hedy Lamarr, Ted Lewis, Beatrice Lillie, Georgie Jessel and Gloria Swanson were added to make up for the critics lack of verbal appreciation.

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' Interview Round Up '

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HELEN HAYES..."I just had to pick myself up and go on," is how the star of The Wisteria Trees explained her return to acting to Morehouse, WT&S. After the death of her daughter, her first impulse was to give up the theatre, but her doctor and friends urged her to go back to work.

VINTON FREEDLEY...The theatre has lost much of its glamour because the lives of the stars are made so public by the columnists, the producer of Great To Be Alive told WNBC Mary Margaret McBride.

BORIS KARLOFF..."The Monster" of films, who plays a double role in Peter Pan, revealed himself as a pleasant gentlemen who greatly admires the children in the cast of the Barrie revival, to Pollock, Compass.

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' Off Broadway '

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THE MISER...Three critics traveled up to the tiny Walt Whitman School Theatre to see the Theatre Classics' production of the Moliere comedy. Funke, Times, and Pihodna, Herald Tribune, recommended the production, direction, and acting as well worth a visit. Rice, Post, felt that a spiritless and straggling production ruined a valiant off Broadway attempt. Donald Somers won top praise as Master Jacques.

HEARTBREAK HOUSE...On-Stage revival of Shaw comedy meets the favor of more critics. Garland, Journal American; Pollock, Compass; Sheaffer, Eagle and Francis, Billboard, all found the script witty, modern and timely. and in contrast to three critics who reported on the proceedings last week, found the acting of a high calibre. Marshall, Nation, supported the majority opinion.

OTHER OFF BROADWAY...Studio Productions presentation of Garcia Lorcas' The House of Bernarda Alba provided a haunting memorable evening for Rice, Post.... sharp "con" review was filed by Francis, Billboard, against Dramatic Workshop's revival of E. P. Conkle's play about Lincoln, Prologue to Glory. The critic is still waiting for a good play on the Lincoln legend, something more than can be discovered in a library book.

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' Lighter Stuff '

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Irwin Shaw almost came to hate the theatre when he covered the shows for New Republic, he told Keating, Cue...Add to Nathan legend: Sobol, Journal American hears that George Jean Nathan actually applauded at a show, proving it was a cold night. Winchell reports Shaw rated Nathan as "Intelligent Playgoer No. 1" after reading his latest "Theatre Book of the Year."...Sylvester, News, regrets very much the fact he missed, or didn't know about, the opening of Alcoholics Anonymous Seamen's Group Annual Stage Show...Phillips, WT&S, wonders if "Dancing Wraith to Wraith" might fit into the musical-ghost scheme of Great To Be Alive.

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' Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

1. NY Times	11. Newark News	21. Catholic World
2. NY Herald Tribune	12. Women's Wear Daily	22. Commonweal
3. NY News	13. Daily Worker	23. Cue
4. NY Mirror	14. Wall Street Journal	24. Chr.Sci.Monitor
5. NY Compass (Star, PM)	15. Journal of Commerce	25. Sat.Review Lit.
6. NY Post	16. George Jean Nathan	26. Newsweek
7. NY Sun (Morehouse)	17. Morning Telegraph	27. Time
8. NY Journal American	18. Variety	28. Nation
9. NY World Telegram & Sun	19. Billboard	29. New Republic
10. Brooklyn Eagle	20. Theatre Arts	30. New Yorker

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-24-30. Con: 1-7-8-16-18-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-22-26-29. Con: 1-2-23-24-25-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Caesar and Cleopatra-National, 12/21/49. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 5-8-13. So-So: 9.

Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-19-20-21-23-27-30. Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-23-24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-22-23 26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-24-26-27-28-30. So-So: 6.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15 17-18-19-20-21-22-23-2(27-30.

The Devil's Disciple-Royale, 2/21/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-22-23 24-26-29. Con: 30. So-So: 16.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 6-21-28. So-So: 16-22-27. None. 25.

Great To Be Alive-Winter Garden, 3/23/50. Pro: 2-3-6-9-12-15-17. Con: 1-5-7-8-10-11-14-18-23-26-27-30. So-So: 4-19.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 5-6-7-26-27-30.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/1/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-16-20-22-27-29-30.

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 23 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29.

Lost In The Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-26. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Man-Fulton, 1/19/50. Pro: 2-4-8-10-11-14-15-23-26. Con: 1-3-5-6-9-12-13-16 19-22-27-30. So-So: 7-17-18.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. So-So: 2-27-30. Con: 16

Miss Liberty-Imperial, 7/15/49. Pro: 4-7-8-12-17-19. Con: 1-2-18-20-22-23-25-27-39. So-So: 4-6-9-21-26.

Mister Roberts, Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep-Broadhurst, 3/2/50. Pro: 2-10-12-15-19-22-29-30. Con: 1-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-14-16-17-18-23-27. So-So: 26.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3 4-5-6-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-26-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27.

The Velvet Glove-Golden, 12/26/49. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-5-16-18-22-23-27-30. So-So: 1-6-7-29.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27.